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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 6153
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 0519
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 2340
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 2619
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 3306
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002589

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PHILIPPINE
FOREIGN MINISTER ROMULO

Classified By: Deputy Secretary Negroponte, reasons 1.4 c, d

¶1. (C) Summary: Meeting July 31 on the margins of the ASEAN summit, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and Deputy Secretary Negroponte agreed on the importance of continued progress in the Six-Party Talks to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. A nuclear-armed North Korea was inimical to the interests of all countries in the region. Romulo also asked for USG support for a Senate budget proposal to increase 2008 U.S. assistance to the Philippines. The Deputy Secretary said that the USG was doing all it could to keep

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assistance at the highest levels to support efforts like the Mindanao peace process and Philippine military reform. End summary.

¶2. (C) Opening the meeting, Foreign Secretary Romulo welcomed the Deputy Secretary as a friend of the Philippines who knew Asia well. The Deputy Secretary stressed the importance of strong U.S.-Philippine ties, saying he was bringing a message of real friendship and support between our two countries, as well as a commitment to the Southeast Asian region as a whole. Over the past 40 years, ASEAN had served as an essential element for peace and stability in East Asia.

Keeping the Pressure on North Korea

¶3. (C) Foreign Secretary Romulo said the Six-Party process to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula appeared to be moving in the right direction. However, next steps would be key, including progress in the five working groups that would meet in August prior to the next plenary. The Deputy Secretary said that the critical point would be whether North Korea was really committed to the process, whether it had made a strategic decision to give up its nuclear weapons and programs. Pyongyang could always drag the process out, giving the least it could while seeking to get more for its actions. Nonetheless, it was essential to press ahead. The U.S. remained hopeful, but things rarely moved according to schedule with North Korea, with the Banco Delta Asia issue as a prime example. The Deputy Secretary added that China had a key role in pressing North Korea to cooperate, and Beijing had no interest in allowing Pyongyang to be a nuclear power. A nuclear North Korea also posed difficult strategic choices for Japan, so these talks were also in Tokyo's best interests.

Seeking Increased U.S. Aid

¶4. (C) Foreign Secretary Romulo welcomed recent U.S. Senate action to increase 2008 funding for Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and Economic Support Funds (ESF) for the Philippines to \$30 million in each account (Note: from the Administration request of \$11 and \$26 million respectively). He asked that the U.S. Executive Branch support the Senate proposal, in light of important progress on counter-terrorism cooperation and defense reform. The Deputy Secretary said that the USG was doing all it could to keep assistance levels as high as possible to support key efforts like the Mindanao peace process and Philippine defense reform.

¶5. (U) July 31, 2007; 17:15; Manila, Philippines

¶6. (U) Meeting Participants:

Philippines

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo
Undersecretary Erlinda Basilio for Policy
Assistant Secretary Romeo Manalo for Asian and Pacific Affairs
Assistant Secretary Rey Carandang for American Affairs
Carlos Sorreta, Minister Counselor, Philippine Embassy in Washington
Assistant Secretary Evan Garcia for UNIO
Victor Lecaros, Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia
Melanie Diano, Principal Assistant, U.S. Division, Office of American Affairs
Catherine Torres, Principal Assistant, Office of Asian and Pacific Affairs
Hans Siriban, Special Assistant, Office of the Undersecretary for Policy

MANILA 00002589 002 OF 002

U.S.

Deputy Secretary John Negroponte
Ambassador Kristie Kenney
DCM Paul Jones
Kaye Lee, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary
Political Counselor Tom Gibbons (notetaker)
KENNEY